

Governor Selects Doria as Head of Community Affairs He cites the ex-Assembly speaker's 'wealth of experience in government'

Saturday, September 22, 2007

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Gov. Jon Corzine said yesterday he has chosen state Sen. Joseph Doria, a lawmaker for more than a quarter century and the mayor of Bayonne for nearly a decade, to lead the state department that oversees local governments.

Doria, a former Assembly speaker, is expected to become acting Department of Community Affairs commissioner on Oct. 9, when he will resign his 31st District Senate seat and his mayoral job. The nomination heads to the Senate for confirmation.

"Joe Doria has a wealth of experience in government at the state and local level," Corzine said. "He is a public servant with high standards of excellence and integrity, and I know he will work tirelessly to assist local government and other stakeholders in issues ranging from affordable housing to construction codes to municipal finances."

Doria said his among first priorities will be confronting the issues of affordable housing, local government finances and Meadowlands development.

"As a mayor and legislator, I know firsthand about the impact the Department of Community Affairs can have on people's lives," he said.

Yesterday's long-awaited announcement was praised by local government officials, housing advocates and builders.

"The governor has selected a person who has a great commitment to affordable housing and has worked with us for years on positive housing and community development legislation," said Diane Sterner, director of the Housing and Community Development Network of New Jersey.

Doria and two Corzine aides recently met with affordable housing activists and building representatives in the governor's office.

William Dressel, director of the New Jersey State League of Municipalities, said local officials welcome the appointment.

"The governor has selected a mayor who not only has extensive experience in running an urban municipality but has first-hand involvement on push button quality of life issues that have been before the Senate and Assembly for 20 to 25 years," Dressel said.

Patrick O'Keefe, president of the New Jersey Builders Association, said Doria "has demonstrated his support for balanced policies that address community concerns while creating housing opportunities for working families."

Doria did not seek re-election to the Senate seat he has held for three years after he fell out of favor with fellow Hudson County Democrats. Doria, 61, also served 24 years in the Assembly, where he was speaker in 1990-91.

Doria's resignations will lead to the appointments of Sandra Bolden Cunningham of Jersey City for the last three months of his Senate term, and Bayonne Council President Vincent Lo Re as

acting mayor for at least a month. Cunningham won the Senate primary in the overwhelmingly Democratic district and is favored to win a full term in the Nov. 6 election.

The appointment was expected since July. However, if Doria had resigned as mayor before Sept. 8, a special election would have been required on Nov. 6 to select his replacement. Instead, the city council in 30 days will select a permanent acting mayor to serve until the November 2008 election.

Earlier this year, Corzine considered Doria, a retired St. Peter's College administrator, for state education commissioner. The cabinet-level DCA post pays \$141,000.